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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000901

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/CACEN; DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: APP SPOKESWOMAN DESCRIBES RAID ON PARTY
OFFICE, 36 HOUR DETENTION

REF: YEREVAN 880

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

SUMMARY

12. (SBU) We met with Ruzanna Khachatryan, Spokeswoman for the opposition Armenian People's Party (APP) to discuss the April 13 police raid on APP Headquarters and her 36-hour police detention. Khachatryan described the police raid in detail, and depicted the behavior of the police during her detention more as "annoying" than abusive. She believes that the police and procurator's office were trying to intimidate her and send a message rather than pursue a criminal investigation. End Summary.

POLICE STORM APP OFFICE

13. (SBU) Ruzanna Khachatryan, Spokeswoman and rally organizer for the APP, was in the party offices preparing a promotional videotape for the party in the early morning of April 13. She told us she received a call from a staff member at the National Accord Party who told her that police had just broken up the opposition demonstration in front of the National Assembly, and had surrounded their party offices. Recognizing that the police would probably raid their headquarters as well, Khachatryan and several other APP members locked themselves in Khachatryan's office and barricaded the door with a table and some chairs. The police arrived at approximately 2:30 a.m. Khachatryan said she could hear them cursing loudly and breaking things in the office. The police called on those in Khachatryan's office to open the door, and that they only intended to ask a few questions and not hurt anyone. When Khachatryan refused to open the door, the police quickly broke it down.

ARREST LIST ALLEGED

14. (SBU) According to Khachatryan, the police that entered the room were both uniformed and plainclothes and most carried batons. In total, she estimated that approximately 20 police officers were in the APP office. Khachatryan says she witnessed the police singling out males present in the APP headquarters to beat with the batons, claiming that Felix Khachatryan, the APP member of the Central Election Commission, was bleeding from a head wound he received from a policeman's baton. Khachatryan told us that some of the police sacked the offices, breaking furniture, and taking videotapes and party documents. Khachatryan said that the commander of the central Yerevan police station led the operation, and he entered the headquarters with a list of names of those to be detained. Khachatryan estimates that the raid took 30 minutes and that she and other APP members were taken into police custody at 3:00 a.m.

MOVING FROM THE INITIAL INTERROGATION...

15. (SBU) The police took Khachatryan to the central police precinct. She said she was immediately taken into an interrogation room, where a police investigator informed she was being held as a witness in a criminal investigation of the opposition Justice Bloc. Khachatryan told us that the investigator had a typed list of questions that he read: "Why did you call for the violent overthrow of the government?" "Why did you participate in an unsanctioned rally?" "Who are the chief organizers of the illegal rallies?" "Who printed

the anti-government leaflets announcing the time and location of rallies?" Khachatryan said she denied any illegal activity for five hours as different interrogators continuously repeated the questions.

...TO WITNESS, TO SUSPECT...

16. (SBU) At 8:00 a.m. Khachatryan said a policeman escorted her to the office of the same police commander who led the raid on APP headquarters. The commander told her that she was no longer being held as a witness, but was now formally charged with attempting to overthrow the constitutional order. He told her that several large file folders on his desk were filled with police information on the senior leadership of the Justice Bloc; Khachatryan described the whole episode as an "act of intimidation." A procurator arrived and also informed her that she had been charged. Khachatryan requested a lawyer, and provided the name of Tigran Ter-Yesayan, President of the International Union of Advocates. She told us Ter-Yesayan never came to the police station. (Note: Ter-Yesayan told a representative of ABA/CEELI in Armenia that the police had contacted him about representing Khachatryan. He went to the central police station and was not allowed to see Khachatryan. He waited two hours before leaving. End Note.) Khachatryan said she refused to answer any questions until she had a lawyer present.

...AND RELEASE

17. (SBU) Khachatryan told us she was transported to a pre-detention facility at 7:00 p.m. April 13. The police at the facility gave her a large cell for four people to herself. She was not interrogated again, and treated generally well by the police. Khachatryan said she was given plenty of food, coffee and cigarettes. She described the whole process as "annoying" but not threatening. At 2:00 p.m. on April 14, a procurator arrived and told her she would be released. He asked her to sign a paper acknowledging she understood that she was no longer considered a suspect and allowed to leave the facility.

SOME ELEMENTS CONFIRMED

18. (SBU) While it is impossible to corroborate Khachatryan's overall description of the raid and her detention, we can confirm certain elements. We observed the state of the APP headquarters at noon on April 13, and the offices had certainly been ransacked (reftel). Kentron television station broadcast images of the interior of the APP offices that showed broken doors and furniture. Other APP members have told us that Felix Khachatryan was injured in the police raid, and several newspapers carried photos of his bloodied shirt that had been left at APP headquarters.

ORDWAY